

IAAC
Friday, April 6, 2018
Sheraton Lisle Naperville 3000 Warrenville Road Lisle, Illinois
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
APPROVED MINUTES

AAC Members Present	AAC Members Absent	Staff
Kathleen Bush	Alice Couch	Mike Deschamps
Natalie Miller	Maria Nanos	Gwenn Eyer
Michelle Price	Maripat Oliver	Sylvia Fonseca
Elizabeth Richmond	Crystal Rekart	Sajad Husain
Keisha Robinson	Jeremy Wheeler	Kelly King
Danielle Sanders		Brooke Miller
Karen Taylor		
Danny Tolliver		
Amy Trotter		Guests
Karen Wardlaw		Christine Feldman
Mark Werner		
Julie Yelverton		

Welcome & Introductions

10:10 a.m. - Elizabeth Richmond, IAAC Co-chair, welcomed members and guests and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes from 03/09/18 Combined IAAC/SWFCAC Meeting

Karen Wardlaw made a motion to approve the minutes. Danny Tolliver seconded. Minutes were approved as written.

Update from Statewide Adoption Administrator – Sylvia Fonseca

Sylvia has been with DCFS for more than 30 years, working as an investigator, placement worker, adoption worker, in the Office of the Guardian, etc. She is excited to work with a great statewide staff getting children to forever homes as soon as possible. Sylvia is a “hands-on” person who has been dedicated to supporting families for her whole career. She is still acclimating to this position and noted that we’re heading in a positive direction.

Q: The former administrator stated that we were to contact her if we were aware of families facing significant delays moving toward adoption. Sajad said to email details to him for follow up if agencies are not moving forward with adoption in a timely manner. We should be moving from TPR to finalization in 544 days, based on the limited data that has been collected. They’re going to set goals to minimize the length of time. It was noted that one of the Director’s goals is to ensure that people who are responsible for certain duties are given the tools needed to do the work in a timely manner.

Sylvia.Fonseca@illinois.gov

TARGET project updates – Christine Feldman

Christine noted that it's interesting that we're still ranking low in achieving permanency while we're leading the nation in post-adoption program work, funded through Medicaid, state dollars and federal dollars.

We've been running the TARGET intervention program in Illinois. We have a comparison group and an intervention group. The target population group is teens, recognizing that teen years can be challenging for any youth. Cook targets ages 12-16. Central region targets ages 11-16. There are 11 counties in the Baby Fold area and 7 counties in the Family Core area. They've reached out to 1650 families in Cook, and 489 families in Central Region and have 112 families enrolled.

The first part of the grant involved producing a staff training video that will be released this spring. The second part is to do a training video for prospective adoptive parents to apprise them of supports available to adoptive parents throughout the state, including educational advocacy, advocacy in court, family therapy, etc. The core messages are that adoptive/guardianship families may need help at various points throughout their journey and this should be expected and normal, and post-adoption and guardianship services are accessible, and if parents and guardians reach out for services and supports in advance of a crisis and receive timely coordinated and comprehensive services they will be more likely to address the needs of children in their care, resulting in a decrease in high end placements or lockouts. It is essential that professionals and parents know where to access post adoption/guardianship services.

Mark asked about how the staff -based training will be accessible to teachers, court staff, etc. Karen Taylor noted that they're focused on marketing it in an accessible way. Vanessa noted that Michelle Grove had been very dedicated to making the federal staff adoption training video accessible through the public part of the VTC as well as the DCFS external website. Karen noted that the Director is very strong on making sure that families have a safety net, including information, along with the confidence that these supports will continue to be dependable. Sajad noted that when he spoke with representatives from other states who felt that they had "decent" services, they haven't been marketed appropriately, so adoptive parents have little confidence in the programs. It seems as though cases are dropped post TPR, i.e., no adoption workers are assigned, no subsidy worker is assigned, subsidies get held up, etc.

Discussion:

Key Parts to the Adoption Process in Illinois - Sajad Husain

Court – takes around 1000 days.

DCFS legal panel – lawyers are paid to assist with the subsidy packet. There's no rule of law or policy that requires this and there hasn't been a lot of oversight/evaluation regarding the time it takes to move forward. Sajad said that we're evaluating this piece.

Lean Management/ Rapid Results – this is not designed to hire or fire people or to save money, but to look at efficiencies.

Issues to be addressed:

a) Forms – there were a lot of redundant forms, unnecessary forms, and duplicate data.

Approximately 12 of the forms have been edited so far.

b) Auditing – sometimes people are doing a good job, but auditors have various perspectives on why forms should be rejected. A guide was created to encourage a more universal judgment of what should be rejected, and why.

c) The Relationship between Permanency Workers and Adoption workers - permanency workers are crisis focused and there hasn't been a lot of focus on the permanency side, working on concurrent planning. This has been addressed through the guides.

d) The fourth major issue is the sending of forms. In the past, we've used snail mail and it takes 22 days in each direction. Now we are scanning forms.

Staffing – he's developed a team to review staffing and identify ways to improve things. There's a plan drafted to look at who needs to go where.

There are General Counsel lawyers that deal with TPR and some that deal with subsidy. There are 530 adoptions sitting out there. Sajad's ideal target completion goal is 260 days after revising our processes, then 125 days is the ultimate goal. Ideally, once we get things updated, we'll use the new timeline to demonstrate that we've done our part in order to partner with courts.

Sajad stated that the goal of the team he's working on is institutional change and better processes. Adoption Labs are successful in Southern Region, offering opportunity for POS workers to work with DCFS reviewers to go through the legal packet, with as many as 15 adoptions being reviewed in one day. Workers can ask direct questions related to their individual cases.

Licensing home studies and background checks are a challenge. The same person that worked with Lean Management is now working with our Licensing Unit to address issues. We need to send out the timeline and be held accountable. The time on implementation on Lean Management is 30 days on Phase 1.

Three things govern what we can or cannot change:

1) Policy – rule we create internally.

2) Statutory Rules – rules that may have been developed externally.

3) Law – only states can change the law.

Sajad.Husain@illinois.gov

Michael Deschamps said that we're working on the core practice model of Best Practice. Some things occur occasionally, but they are focused on fixing the big barriers, i.e., subsidy packets, legal loopholes, etc. It's going to get better, but it will take time. By federal decree, we have to convert to CWIS, so we're starting an IT development process. We've always had good data, but it comes from a many different places. From a ground level we're identifying problems and working to fix them. We can change anything, but some things really take time.

Messages the program promotes:

- Adoptive/guardianship families may need help at various points throughout their journey, and this should be expected and considered normal, and post adoption/guardianship services must be accessible.
- If parents or guardians reach out for services and supports in advance of a crisis and receive timely coordinated and comprehensive services, they will be more likely to continue.

Michael said to contact him with issues and concerns. His personal cell phone number is 815-990-8570, DCFS cell number is 312-914-9523 and his DCFS landline is 708-210-3716.

Michael.J.Deschamps@illinois.gov.

ASAP Conference – Christine Feldman

The Adoption Support and Preservation Conference will be held May 16th in Springfield. Christine noted that lunch will be provided and they're working with staff to select speakers. The keynote speaker is Tim Grove. Christine said that Oprah was on 60 minutes discussing trauma, and featured Bruce Perry, a leading expert in trauma-informed practices. Tim Grove, who was mentored by Bruce Perry, will present during the morning session. The afternoon will include a panel presentation. They will prepare vignettes with common problems and the clinicians will address solving the problems using their individual modality expertise. Christine asked the council to review the vignettes prior to their use and invited the council to attend the conference. Elizabeth is collecting names for council members who would like to attend. We're not sure how many slots we will have. It's a one-day meeting and will start at 9:00 a.m. Lunch will be provided.

Adoption Guardianship Support Line Website – Vanessa James

Previously the phone line greeting was an inward-looking message that applied mostly to foster parents who had adopted children through DCFS. Now the automated message has a branch for adoption subsidy questions and another branch for supports, plus a speed option to get to voicemail. Vanessa demonstrated making a call so that the council could observe the way the phone line now works. It was noted that there is always an option to go directly to voice mail so return callers can skip message options. The voice mail box is monitored and answered within 24 hours. Spanish-speaking options are also in place.

Phone calls are tracked using a new SharePoint site to document contact forms, which are completed by DCFS staff and the ASAP agency providers. Coming enhancements proposed by the council include: a method for providers to note if the call originated on the toll-free line; a way to track calls made directly to the agency so that phone line staff can touch back to follow up; and an option where callers can directly dial an extension. The marketing efforts to support the new line is set to happen next week with an article in IL Families Now and Forever and internal announcements.

Vanessa also reviewed the prototype for the post-adoption web site "front door." The site will offer a chat/message box to submit questions and concerns. The Department is beginning to look at the chat bot option and it may be available in the future. Vanessa is working with Cynthia

Richter-Jackson to get approval on the service request from the technology team, then coding will begin. Meanwhile, Vanessa and the work group will curate content on resources from providers and blog post topics. Launch for the web site is targeted for July.

The Caring and Sharing on-demand training for medical and child welfare providers can go live now that the support phone number is launched.

NTI Grant – Kelly King

They are planning an online training. It will be beneficial for anyone working with kids who've experienced trauma to help them understand trauma and how it affects a youth's mental health and understanding the challenges that come along in the permanency process. There's also a coaching portion, similar to a training of trainers. They have about 70 people interested in coaching. To be a coach, people will have to participate in the phone calls.

Legislative/Policy – Kathleen Bush/ Julie Yelverton

They discussed the Family First Prevention Services Act during the last meeting. This law permits states to receive federal reimbursement under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act to support family preservation services for children at risk of entering care. Services must be promising, supported, or well-supported by evidence; must be trauma-informed; and must address one of the following: mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment services by a qualified clinician or in-home parent skill-based services, including parent education or training and family counseling.

HB 4607 provides that a grandparent may not be criminally or civilly liable for considered kidnapping if the grandparent transports a child to another state for medical care or treatment under certain conditions.

HB 4796 expands the protections in the Domestic Violence Act and Code of Criminal Procedure to include the following as protected person if they are abused by a member of the child's birth family or prior household member of the child: 1) foster parents 2) legally appointed guardians 3) adoptive parents 4) prospective adoptive parents with whom a child has been placed.

HB 4909 amends the Vital Records Act to waive the cost for birth record searches or certified copies of birth records for all requests made by 1) a youth in care 2) a person under 27 who was a youth in care or 3) on or after his or her 18th birthday.

HB 4943 creates a tax credit in an amount equal to the qualified adoption expenses paid or incurred by a taxpayer who legally adopts a child who was in the custody of DCFS during the taxable year, not to exceed \$2,500 per child. It also creates a Helping Illinois Youth in Care income tax check-off fund.

HB 5155 makes changes to certain adoption consent forms.

HB 2655 amends the Juvenile Court Act to provide that in selecting a permanency goal for a minor over age 15 of substitute care pending independence, DCFS may provide services to enable reunification and to strengthen the minor's connections with family, fictive kin and other

responsible adults, provided that the services are in the minor's best interest and documented in the service plan.

Peoria Public Schools just received a large grant to work with kids who've experienced trauma. Julie suggested that DCFS could possibly share information from Adoption Preservation. They are going to try to connect with the DCFS Legislative Liaison.

Karen Taylor mentioned two recent policies. The first states that there is a sibling exception in kin gap cases for kids over 12 in a licensed relative home or under age 12 in an unlicensed relative home. July 1 legislation establishes that foster parents who provide care for one year continuously are now considered fictive kin, making children previously ineligible for KinGap would now be eligible.

Mark distributed the committee list for review and updates, noting that council members must serve on at least one committee.

Bylaws Revisions – Mark Werner

Page 1:

- Standardized the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council name (throughout).
- Removed DCFS Director's name and co-chairs' names.
- Corrected formatting error.
- Added amendment date.

Page 2:

- Add "rules" to 6.
- 1 a Change to: "Adoptive parents who are representative of all areas of the State of Illinois. This will consist of two adoptive parents each from Southern, Central and Northern Administrative Regions; Four adoptive parents from Cook County and two adoptive parents at-large (from anywhere in Illinois.)
- Revised to say up to 6 adoption and guardianship service providers/professionals with at least one representing CWAC.
- Revised to say four adults who were adopted as children, all of whom were adopted in Illinois.
- Revised to say a representative from either the North American council on Adoptable Children or the National Foster Parent Association.
- Revised to say Two co-chairs appointed by the Director, one adoptive parent and one professional, both of whom serve on CWAC.

Page 3:

- Meets six times per year.

Mark stated that for the past couple of years the council has not been focused on individual committee work, instead working as a committee of the whole on the grant and other initiatives that covered multiple committees. Now the council is looking at focusing on setting specific committee goals and holding committee meetings by phone at least monthly, reporting at meetings.

Adjourn

The motion to adjourn was made by Danny Tolliver, seconded by Julie Yelverton. The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Next Meeting: June 2, 2017 - Sheraton, 3000 Warrenville Road, Lisle